Perception of Secondary school Teachers about Effectiveness of Inclusive Education

* Dr. Ampili Aravind
** Sunandakumari. C

* Associate professor, NSS Training College, Ottapalam, Kerala
** Part-time Research scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to find out the perception of secondary school teachers about effectiveness of inclusive education. This study made use of convenience sampling for the selection of sample. Data was collected from the sample-using questionnaire developed by the investigators. The findings of the study reveal that majority of the secondary school teachers perceive inclusive education as less effective. None of the resources and infrastructure facilities was perceived as effective for implementing inclusive education. In service, training is in its initial stage. Training for early identification and remediation are essential and support facilities should be improved.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Teacher perception

Introduction:

Education means the acquisition of knowledge and experience as well as the development of skills, habits, and attitudes, which help a person to lead a full and worthwhile life in this world. It is a process of training the individual through various experiences of life to draw out the best in him. One of the important social objectives of education is to equalize educational opportunities. It was reported that about 10% of the school-going children are with specific kind of learning disability. Learning disabilities are increasing in the present society.

The history of learning disabilities began after World War II when educators began to experience a new phenomenon in the classroom. Teachers worldwide were experiencing increasing numbers of children with average or above average intelligence who were having difficulty learning, and sometimes performed below their peers who were also of average intelligence.

Education's contribution to learning disabilities has been to modify and accommodate varying strengths and weaknesses in the classroom with a continuing effort to meet increasing demands. Inclusion, is a philosophy that brings students ,families ,educators and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging and community(Salend,2001).It describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.

Education has done its best to adapt to the special needs of these children, but assessments and individualized education plans do little to prevent or modify the problem. There appears to be an outstanding need for more parent advocacy on behalf of the rights of children to a healthy environment in which to develop. Successful inclusion depends a great deal on regular education teachers, as well as special education teachers, administrators and parents so their co-operation is critical. There is a need to further explore the effectiveness of inclusive education to make it more effective by finding out and remediating the defects of the present practices.

A research study on teachers' perception of successful inclusion has concluded that training, class load, support and time are essential to success. Some teachers state that their undergraduate training did "nothing" to prepare them for inclusion. (Dlugosh and Smith, 1999). A study (Vaidya, 1997) indicates that general education teachers do not feel prepared to meet the needs of students with special needs especially those with learning disabilities. They must understand that there are individual differences among students with learning disabilities. The teachers must understand how to implement inclusive practices, teaching techniques such as hands –on activities, group work, and computer based learning for all students and the process of collaboration and team teaching with other teachers.

The research study (Johnson & Newton, 2014) based on primary teachers' perception of inclusive education showed that ninety percent of the teachers expressed negative perceptions of inclusive education. It was also revealed that the important factors influencing perception are teacher-training, resources, support, infrastructure and the understanding of inclusion. Based on these and other research findings the investigators felt a need for finding out the perception of teachers about the effectiveness of inclusive education in the present day.

Objectives:

1. To find out the extent of teacher perception about effectiveness of inclusive education in secondary schools
2. To identify the prominent areas which help in effective implementation of inclusive education as per teacher perception?

Hypotheses:

1. The number of teachers with High, Average and Low perception of effectiveness of inclusive education varies.
2. Teacher perception of effectiveness of inclusive education varies with respect to Teacher training, Resources, Support, Infrastructure and the understanding of inclusive education.

Method

In order to collect data for this study, a questionnaire which consisted of twenty-five questions was developed and administered .It consists of five dimensions, like, teacher training, Resources, Support, Infrastructure and the understanding of inclusive education which are based on the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of inclusive education (Johnson & Newton, 2014). Content validity and face validity of the tool was established.

Participants:

Utilizing convenience sampling, a group of secondary school teachers (n=34) were selected from Mannarkkad educational district of Palakkad district. All of them had a minimum of 3 years teaching experience and consisted of 11 males and 23 females. Convenience sampling was utilized because of feasibility and access to the participants (Andrews & Frankel, 2010).

After selection of the sample the investigators met the teachers and explained the nature and confidentiality of the study. Data collected with the help of questionnaire and response sheets where scored. Percentage analysis was used to estimate the extent of effectiveness of inclusive education and to identify the prominent areas, which help in effective implementation of inclusive education.

Results and Discussion:

The extent of effectiveness of inclusive education in the total sample was established by using percentage analysis. It is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Extent of teacher perception of effectiveness of inclusive education

Response categories	Number	Percentage
Highly Effective	0	0
Moderately effective	4	11.76
Less Effective	30	88.24

In the total sample of 34 secondary school teachers 88.24% of teachers perceive that inclusive education is less effective, 11.76% perceive inclusive education as moderately effective. None of them perceives it as highly effective.

To identify the prominent areas which help in effective implementation of inclusive education as per teacher perception, percentage of agreement to the listed statements were determined and those with 50% and more agreement were taken as effective. Table 2 shows the results of percentage analysis of the teacher perception of effectiveness of inclusive education under different dimensions.

Table 2
Percentage analysis of effectiveness of different dimensions in implementing inclusive education

Sl No	Areas	Total No. of statements under each area	No. of statements from each area with 50% or more agreement	% of statements from each area with 50% or more agreement
1	Teacher training	6	1	16.67
2	Resources	6	0	0
3	Support	6	2	33.33
4	Infrastructure	2	0	0
5	Understanding of inclusive education	3	1	33.33

From the results of Table 2 it was clear that none of the Resources and Infrastructure facilities listed were perceived as effective. The Resources included in the test items are; suitability of the curriculum, Provision in the teaching manual, Special tools or learning materials, Availability of suitable soft ware, Participation in arts and sports activities. Infrastructure facilities mentioned were total physical environment of the classroom, and suitability of lab and library facilities.

There were six statements regarding teacher training. Out of this, only one related to provision for teachers to attend in-service training in connection with learning disability was found to be effective. Others related to familiarity with suitable teaching – learning strategies, evaluation methods, remedial teaching, suitability of progress report and pre service training were perceived as less effective in implementing inclusive education.

Regarding the support facilities, two statements were perceived as more effective. These statements related to support of peers and special education teachers in the identified cases of learning disability.

Among the three-listed one was perceived as effective in understanding of inclusive education, i.e., knowledge about the types of learning disability.

Conclusion:

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the teachers perceive inclusive education as less effective while considering students with learning disability. The effectiveness of teacher training, resources, support facilities, infrastructure facilities and understanding of inclusive education in implementing inclusive education revealed that training programmes were in its initial stage, others should be made effective to provide quality inclusive education.

Even though inclusive education has several advantages in increasing the academic, social and communication skills of these students, they are still facing challenges. More than that number of students with learning disability is increasing year by year so there is an urgent need for improvement in the effectiveness and quality of inclusive education programs.

In the case of secondary education, following measures can be taken to implement inclusive education effectively. It is important to focus on early identification and remediation and utilize research-based, effective strategies to assist students before behavioral or emotional issues emerge. Give training in and adopt differentiated instructional approach to teaching in which a teacher plans and carries out varied approaches to address content ,learning processes, learning style, practical procedures, presentation strategies and assessment tools. It results in a more personal proactive learning environment, inclusive of a wide variety of learners. Improve the infrastructural facilities, ensure support from administrators, special education teachers, parents, other students, and make available specific resources needed for dealing with different types of learning disabilities.

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